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CHRISTIANITY in KOREA: Ecumenical Involvement and Understanding.

Ecumenical involvement and understanding in Korea? There are those who publicly wonder if there is any. Publicly, these last few years has spotlighted division and factionalism, and withdrawal and isolationism. After all, this is the land where <sup>(so-called 'ecumenical' Presbyterians withdraw from the WCC, where)</sup> Presbyterianism is splintered fourteen different ways. Where there is a Jesus' Presbyterian Church (ours!) and a Christ Presbyterian Church (theirs!) - and Jesus doesn't get along with Christ. This is the land where Orthodox and Bible Presbyterians launch crusades to convert us 'apostate' Presbyterians, and where, on the other side, the United Chh of Canada unanimously and publicly announces a ~~liberal literature~~ crusade to liberalize us. This is the land where

Caught in the midst of these cross-currents and tensions, does the church in Korea really have any chance for real ecumenical involvement and understanding? Doesn't its whole history, as well as its present predicament pull it irresistibly the other way.

Actually - publicly and unopposed to the contrary, ~~the~~ both in its history and ~~is~~ in its present situation, our church in Korea has ~~been and is~~ <sup>in some</sup> ~~more~~ ecumenical. ~~that most people realize.~~ <sup>And when - among the things that</sup>

Let me divide what I have to say into two sections: ① A look at ecumenical involvement in the church's past, and ② A look at the present ecumenical potential prospects for the church.

ECUMENICAL  
IN KOREA

1. Ecumenical - 1885-1906
2. Denominational - 1905-1942
3. False Ecumenical - 1942-45. 2
4. Recovery of denominations. 1945-50
5. Division 1950-1965(?)
6. Ecumenical

## I. First, the historical background.

It is tragic, in a way, that the bewildering progress of apparently complete Protestant unions and societies in Korea (between 40-50), added to the present sad splintering of denominations, has been allowed to obscure the emphatically ecumenical nature of Protestant beginning in this country. The first 20 years of Protestant work in Korea - the period from 1885-1905 - should really be called the "Ecumenical Period", and the reason for this was the attitude and emphasis of our Presb. missionaries of that day, and their Methodist colleagues: -

The four different Presbyterian bodies, for example (now U.P., S.P., Australian Presb. and United Ch. of Canada) agreed at once to forget their divisions at home and join in forming only one Presbyterian church in Korea. For this purpose, as early as 1889, Presbyterian missionaries established an organ of inter-mission co-operation that came to be called the Presbyterian Council. Likewise the two Methodist missions (N. and S.) early agreed to unite in educational and literary work.

By 1892 enthusiasm for co-operation overleaped confessional boundaries and brought Methodists and Presbyterians into an agreement to divide the Korean peninsula into non-competitive geographical spheres of influence. As finally hammered out some fifteen years later, this remarkable comity agreement saw about four thousand Methodists ~~eventually~~ become Presbyterians overnight as rural areas were denominationally redistricted, and about the same number of Presbyterians awoke to discover that they had suddenly become Methodists.

In schools and hospitals as well, Protestant cooperation vaulted over denominational barriers. Describing an experiment in union educational work at Soongsil College in 1905, Dr. W. M. Baird wrote, "The need was so great that we (i.e. Meth. and Presb.) did not wait for a well developed scheme or constitution for the control of the school before commencing. We simply commenced to cooperate by cooperating.. It is better to work shoulder to shoulder than in disunion and weakness and moral defeat." The result of this pioneer ecumenical spirit was the foundation of Soongsil College, whose first two graduates, three years later, were the first in Korea to receive college diplomas.

Soon an even wider union brought Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian physicians into Severance Union Medical College and Hospital in Seoul. And although it was not founded until the middle of the next decade, Korea's most ambitious union project, Yonsei University, eventually brought Koreans, Americans, Canadians, Britishers and Australians into cooperation, with Methodists,

Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, the United Church of Canada, and even the United Church in the Philippines sharing in the project in one way or the other.

In literary and translation work, too, the missionaries pooled their talents and resources irrespective of denominational ties. By 1889 they had organized the Korean Religious Tract Society, now the C.L.S., and opened the twentieth century with their greatest literary achievement, the completion of the Korean translation of the New Testament only 16 years after the arrival of the first missionary. A few years later a Union Hymn Book was published, so in Scripture and in song the denominations were united.

They were united because the missionaries themselves, from the beginning were ecumenical. Horace Allen, the medical pioneer, who opened the country to Protestant missions in 1884, was a Presbyterian, but a graduate of a Methodist college. Horace Underwood, the first minister, was Dutch Reformed, a graduate of New Brunswick seminary, but went out under our Presbyterian Board. Appenzeller the first Methodist, was trained in the German Reformed tradition, but went to a Methodist seminary. Dr. Heron, the second head of Severance, was the son of a Congregational minister, but went to a Presbyterian college and came out as a Presbyterian.

Every Korean New Year, in those days of beginnings, the Presbyterians and Methodists would gather together for a combined service of worship and dedication to show to the world their Christian unity in Christ.

The high point of the tide to union was the year 1905-1906. A summer Bible Conference for all missionaries had been held for the first time, taking their minds off their surface differences and focusing them on the deep truths of the Book that brings Christians close to Christ and to each other. A committee meeting of Methodists and Presbyterians was called to discuss union efforts in evangelism and theological education. Swept along by the spirit of harmony and good will, the group unanimously accepted a motion by the Southern Presbyterian pioneer, Dr. W. D. Reynolds, declaring that "...the time is ripe for the establishment of one Korean National Church, to be called the Church of Christ in Korea."

*came back - the letter from Hawaii - Meth & Presb Koreans not getting along well. Dr. Moffett asked to look into matter on way home. In 1906 the report had met with the American Koreans, and persuaded them to bury differences, from one chd: a Methodist church. (1906)*

The enthusiasm thus generated brought the six major missions then at work in Korea (N. and S. Presbyterian, N. and S. Methodist, Australian and Canadian Presbyterian) into a General Council of Evangelical Missions in Korea that took as its aim "cooperation in Christian work and eventually the organization of one Evangelical Church in Korea". A mass meeting of delegates, representing 196 missionaries, about 95% of the total Protestant force in Korea at that time, unanimously ratified the Council's ambitious aim. It was the high watermark of union effort in Korea.

The melancholy fact is that at that point the mission field was ahead of the home church in ecumenicity. At home, the Boards were concerned about loss of support from denomination-conscious constituency. On the field, also, interest in church union waned, and was replaced by intensive denominational expansion, tempered by friendly cooperation. Church union, it was persuasively argued, cannot be dictated by missions from abroad, but must be the free choice of the Korean churches which were in the process of organization. Disappointment over the fading of a magnificent dream gave way to heady excitement as the world watched the meteoric rise and growth of great denominational Korean churches.

*It is not just a community of faith - Church calls to Mission & Unity  
Unity comes. But emphasis on mission - pioneer.*

## II. Present Situation

The General Council of ~~Presb.~~ Protestant Evangelical Missions in Korea, organized to promote union, became the Federal Council of Protestant Evangelical Missions (1911) to work for cooperation, not union. Eight years later when when what is now the National Christian Council was organized (1919) to extend membership to Korean chh. bodies so many of the responsibilities ~~were~~ of the ~~mission~~ Council of Missions were turned over to the more inclusive ecumenical organization.

The N.C.C. has been the major ecumenical link between the churches of Korea and world Christian organizations. Its membership includes not only ~~the~~ the major Protestant denominations and missions but also such union Christian enterprises as the Korean Bible Society - which this year published an exciting new translation of the New Testament in modern conversational Korean - the Christian Literature Society, with its ambitious program of translation of recent Western theological works - the YMCA & YWCA, and - Child World Service, the Protestant Relief agency. - and HCKY, the pioneering Christian Broadcasting System, whose Director is an am. Presb. missionary, Dr. E. Otto DeCamp but whose interdenominational Christian approach now reaches Korea not only through the Seoul radio station, but also through five branch stations. Television.

The mission side of the former General Council of Protestant Missions in Korea, meanwhile, has been largely taken over by an even broader-based ecumenical organization: the Korea Association of Voluntary Agencies - whose member bodies span the spectrum from secular agencies, like the Amer.-Korea Foundation,

World Vision & the Christian Ref. ch. & the major Protestant  
missions, & the Roman Catholic chd. The present chair is from  
the Christian Ref. Mission, the vice-chair is V.P. a second V.P. is YMCA  
the Treasurer is Lutheran, & the Secretary is Sister Rosemary Huber of the  
Maryknoll sisters.

Nationwide Evangelistic Campaign: 8,000 churches  
Doubled the asked for budget  
30,000 decisions.

Academy House - you need no further introduction

NEATS - Dr. Rhee is Secretary. KAATS - <sup>80%</sup> ~~50~~ Seminars  
40 un-accredited

EACC - Dr. Kang Wm-Yang (Vice Pres.)

Dr. Jung-Sung Rhee - staff member

Two major weaknesses: ① decreasing proportion of Korean chd membership ecumenically united  
② too dependent on foreign funds.